

Statement Against HB 4105 and 4334

My name is Melanie Goldberg. I make this statement in opposition to HB 4105 and HB 4334. I have been an immigration attorney in Michigan for the last 20 years. I am the recently elected Chair of the Michigan chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. I currently work for the non-profit Justice for Our Neighbors Southeastern Michigan [JFON SEMI] where I have had the privilege of meeting and representing a number of individuals in compelling situations throughout southeastern Michigan. The mission of JFON SEMI is to provide free immigration legal services to those who otherwise cannot afford an attorney.

These bills collectively are a direct attack on local police and sheriff's authority to keep their own communities safe.

I often represent victims of crime. I would like to share 2 recent examples with you:

The first is "Joe" an undocumented young father of 2 US citizen children. His wife's car broke down a few blocks away from their home. Joe was walking to where the car was so he could wait for the tow truck. On his way he was accosted by a couple of young armed men. Joe reported the incident to the police. They identified the crime as felonious assault. Joe has continued to assist the police in identifying the perpetrator. Had he been fearful that reporting the crime to the police would result in his ICE arrest the police would have no investigation and one more criminal would go undetected.

Even more compelling is the second case. "Julia" is the undocumented mother of a 7 year old. Julia was never married to her son's father (a US Citizen by birth), but he did exercise his parenting rights. One day, the child told his mom some of the things that happened while he was at his father's apartment. Julia, felt safe enough to report what she learned to the police. An investigation ensued. The investigation led to the father's arrest, charge for criminal sexual conduct of a minor; and conviction. He served jail time and now is forbidden contact with his son due to an active PPO. Had Julia been fearful that she might be "outed" and turned over to ICE by an officer who was feeling empowered by legislation such as this, the results may have been completely different.

Making state authorities complicit in warrantless immigration detention through state law will not benefit anyone. The most it will do is to undermine community trust. This kind of destructive legislation makes us less safe and puts fundamental rights at risk.

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